

Message Text

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SUBJ: IMPLICATION OF WORLDWIDE POPULATION GROWTH FOR UNITED
STATES SECURITY AND OVERSEAS INTERESTS

REFS: (A) STATE 301427 (B) STATE 297241

COMMENTS BELOW ARE KEYED TO LETTERED SECTIONS PARA 4 REF (A):

A. CAMEROON'S BASIC POPULATION POLICY: CAMEROON HAS NO CLEARLY STATED POPULATION POLICY. CAMEROON'S PRESENT PRACTICE REFLECTS THE INFLUENCE OF OLD FRENCH LAW, TRADITIONAL DESIRE FOR LARGE FAMILIES, AND INCREASING AWARENESS BY YOUNGER CAMEROONIANS OF NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING AND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, BIRTH CONTROL. THERE IS NO CLEAR LEGAL PROHIBITION OF CONTRACEPTIVE PRACTICES, YET REFERENCES TO EARLIER FRENCH LAWS LEAVE LOCAL LAWYERS IN AGREEMENT THAT CAMEROON HAS NEITHER A PRO-FAMILY PLANNING POLICY NOR A LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES. NEVERTHELESS, CAMEROON IS NOT PRO-NATALIST, AND LEADING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE INVOLVED IN FAMILY PLANNING TRAINING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PILOT FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE PROGRAMS. THE GOVERNMENT OF CAMEROON (GURC) IS NOW IN THE FINAL STATES OF DRAFTING THE FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN. AT EARLIER STAGES IN THE DRAFTING, IT WAS DECIDED TO CREATE AN INTERMINISTERIAL COMMISSION TO DEAL WITH POPULATION ISSUES. THE FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN, WHEN IT EMERGES IN FINAL, WILL REVEAL THE DEGREE TO WHICH CAMEROON HAS BEEN ABLE TO DEFINE A POPULATION POLICY.

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B. CAMEROON'S POPULATION PROGRAM: DEFINED AS SUCH, CAMEROON DOES

NOT HAVE A POPULATION PROGRAM. HOWEVER, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF CURRENT PROJECTS WHICH REFLECT THE PERMISSIVE STANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT TOWARD FAMILY PLANNING ACTIVITIES. AID IS SUPPORTING A NUMBER OF THESE ACTIVITIES WHICH RELATE TO FERTILITY DECLINE: THESE INCLUDE THE TRAINING OF MIDWIVES IN FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION; ASSISTING WITH THE FIRST NATIONAL CENSUS; SUPPORTING FAMILY PLANNING CLINICS AT URBAN HEALTH CENTERS AND THE NATIONAL HOSPITAL (CUSS); AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AIMED AT INTEGRATING FAMILY PLANNING INTO FAMILY HEALTH TRAINING PROGRAMS. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE NOT COSTLY AND CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE PROCESS WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY REQUIRE GURC TO DEVELOP A POPULATION POLICY FAVORING THE AVAILABILITY OF FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES. CONTINUED SUPPORT IS JUSTIFIED IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN THESE FORCES UNTIL A FAVORABLE GOVERNMENT POLICY OPENS THE DOOR FOR MUCH STRONGER SUPPORT.

C. POPULATION GROWTH IN CAMEROON IS AT AN ESTIMATED RATE OF 2.2 PERCENT WHICH IN URBAN AREAS IS AS HIGH AS 8 PERCENT BECAUSE OF MIGRATION. THE INFLUENCE OF THIS GROWTH UPON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT HAS TO DATE BEEN ONLY MARGINAL AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. EXPENDITURES FOR SOCIAL SERVICES ARE STEADILY INCREASING, BUT THUS FAR THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT EFFORTS ON FOOD IMPORTS, DOMESTIC SAVINGS AND THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.

D. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS FELT THE PRESSURE OF POPULATION GROWTH, PARTICULARLY IN THE RAPIDLY EXPANDING CITIES. UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS ARE HIGH, THE PRICE OF FOOD IN THE CITIES IS SOARING, SCHOOLS ARE UNABLE TO ABSORB THE YOUNG, AND MINOR THEFT IS COMMONPLACE. TRADITIONAL FAMILY TIES ARE NOT MAINTAINED BECAUSE OF THE INABILITY TO AFFORD THE EXCHANGE OF GIFTS.

E. THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT ALSO REFLECTS THE OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS AS WASTE REMOVAL CANNOT KEEP PACE WITH THE NEED. IN NORTH CAMEROON, WHICH HAS SOME OF THE MOST DENSELY POPULATED AREAS OF THE COUNTRY, THE COMBINATION OF OVERGRAZING AND THE DROUGHT HAS LED TO A DEGENERATION OF LAND AND WATER RESOURCES TO A POINT WHERE IT CAN BE SEEN THAT, IF THIS PROCESS IS NOT REVERSED, NORTH CAMEROON WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SUPPORT ITS PEOPLE AFTER TEN TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FIFTEEN YEARS.

F. THE CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE IN CAMEROON IS STABLE AND NOT LIKELY TO BE THREATENED BY POPULATION PRESSURE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. UNEMPLOYMENT AND INFLATION HAVE RESULTED IN INCREASED WORKER DEMANDS AND PETTY CRIME BUT THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO INVOLVE OTHER CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES. PRESENT GURC THINKING ON POPULATION PROBLEMS EMPHASIZES RESETTLEMENT IN NEW DEVELOPMENT AREAS

RATHER THAN LIMITATION OF GROWTH TO RELIEVE PRESSURE.

G. THE UNITED STATES CAN BEST CONTRIBUTE TO THE EVOLUATION OF A FAVORABLE POPULATION POLICY IN CAMEROON BY CONTINUING TO OFFER A VARIETY OF TYPES OF ASSISTANCE THROUGH A COMBINATION OF GOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS. THIS APPROACH PERMITS THE APPLICATION OF RESOURCES TO SMALL EFFORTS WHERE THE GREATEST POLITICAL IMPACT CAN BE EXPECTED, WHILE RESERVING LARGE-SCALE SUPPORT UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THERE IS AN OFFICIAL EFFORT TO DEVELOP NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES.
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